



**HEALTH CONSUMERS'  
COUNCIL**  
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## **Diversity Dialogues**

**Effective mental health practices when working  
cross culturally | July 2016**

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# Background

Diversity Dialogues was initiated as a means of providing a forum for members of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) communities and health care providers to meet, to comment on and to discuss various aspects of health care provision. The aims are to:

- encourage culturally aware and competent health care provision to CaLD health consumers
- educate and inform health care providers
- provide networking and learning opportunities for all who attend.

Recommendations are fed on to health care providers and to the Department of Health.

Frequently forums are held in partnership with other service providers. Health topics to date have been (for example) Men's Health, Dementia, Mental Health and the use of interpreters in health care. This forum was held in partnership with DNAMER, KEMH, with support from Jenny Owen, Midwifery Educator.

# Effective mental health practices when working cross culturally

## **Acknowledgements:**

This forum was held in partnership with Fremantle Hospital; thanks go to Carole Steiner for the invitation to partner also for organising the venue and inviting attendees. Huge thanks to Ms Tania Harris, Mr Gemechu Denbali and Prof Alex Main who were the Panel speakers and without whom the forum could not have happened. Unfortunately, two other Panel members were unable to attend. The forum was facilitated by Louise Ford (HCC) who opened the forum by welcoming those present and introducing the Panel members.

## **The forum:**

The key functions of Diversity Dialogues are to provide an opportunity:

- a) for health care staff to engage with community members from new and emerging/CaLD/Aboriginal communities and vice versa (and sometimes health professionals who are experienced in working cross culturally)
- b) for health care staff to learn about culture and its' potential implications on both service provision and the way in which service provision is received
- c) to make recommendations to improve service provision to people from new and emerging/CaLD/Aboriginal backgrounds. (Such recommendations can be applied by staff and, in some cases, be fed on to the Dept of Health in order to influence policy and inform practice.)

Yesterday's forum included discussion around engaging with communities, the impact of funding and staffing cuts on service provision, the ability to offer equitable service, how to be more inclusive of diversity in a mental health setting and how to create an environment that celebrates and welcomes diversity.

## **Recommendations made:**

Recommendations that came out of the forum are as follows:

- Whilst outreach work did not seem a possibility in terms of engaging with CaLD people a suggestion was made that in-reach could be an option. Local NGOs who provide services can be invited to deliver some services from hospitals.
- Celebrate Naidoc Week – Fremantle and Fiona Stanley Hospitals to see what has taken place in other locations and organise an event for 2017
- Create a calendar that notes meaningful dates for other cultures and celebrate these with patients/clients/community
- Bring communities into hospitals to familiarise people with the environment
- Celebrate Harmony Day
- Engage with staff from diverse cultural backgrounds to celebrate multiculturalism e.g. share food
- The multidisciplinary run Wellness Group on V5, that celebrates diversity, could be provided to mental health patients to encourage wholeness
- Include Aboriginal and other patients in groups, play music, sing in language and teach others the words, share culture – this suggestion is based on observation of mental health practices in NZ where Maori patients are encouraged to share with other cultures and vice versa. The strategy has been very successful.

- Have radios on wards so people can listen to familiar music
- Access services of a multicultural clinical psychologist
- Access a Living Skills program
- Identify priorities and ensure equity of access to services
- Encourage community members to volunteer and help with engaging with patients (could try tapping in to the local councils' volunteer program)
- Gain feedback on any actions undertaken so there is evidence of improvements and ask for support to continue specific actions that have been successful
- Raise recommendations with the Refugee and Humanitarian Health Research Alliance via HCC
- Meet up every year and include community
- Raise awareness of the role of Aboriginal Liaison Officer/s and get to know them
- Make sure people really do understand what you are saying and doing in your everyday practice

I wish you every success in implementing these recommendations in the work that you do. I have included a link here to a website that you may be interested in viewing in the context of the forum and ensuing discussion:

[http://www.mhpod.gov.au/assets/sample\\_topics/combined/Cultural\\_Awareness/objective1/index.html](http://www.mhpod.gov.au/assets/sample_topics/combined/Cultural_Awareness/objective1/index.html)

To close I would like to comment that it is also important to remember that it is not only the culture of 'others' that plays a role in the way in which we provide services. We all have culture and it is important to consider the impact of that 'cultural lens' when we are providing a service.